

Wise
Woman

HERBAL

FOR THE **CHILDBEARING YEA**



by Susun S. Weed

Artichokes are
unopened Thistle
buds.

Indians used Thistles to induce temporary sterility by preparing an infusion of the entire plant in boiling water and drinking the resulting strong, bitter liquid. All varieties of Thistle are edible and I have enjoyed many meals of them, eating both the roots and the inner portion of the stem.

Implantation Preventers

Herbs which prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg do so safely and relatively painlessly by making the *endometrium* unsuitable for the growth of the embryo. They are taken before or after the unprotected fertilizing intercourse. Positive results are indicated by a normal menstrual flow at the normal time. Women say that when they have used these herbs their flow has been somewhat heavier and has contained more clots than usual, circumstantial evidence of a pregnancy that didn't take. As there's been no controlled study of possible side effects from long and regular use of these herbs, they should not be used on a monthly basis. No known side effects accompany occasional use.

- **Wild Carrot seed** One teaspoonful of the seeds of Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) is taken daily, starting at the time of ovulation or immediately after unprotected intercourse during the fertile time, and continued for up to one week to prevent pregnancy. Women in Ragasthan, India use cultivated carrot seed in the same way. Researchers there have found that ingestion of carrot seed by mice prevents the implantation of their fertilized eggs. The seeds are oily and strong tasting, but not bitter or unpleasant. They are easily available for the taking in many areas of the world. Several species of Wild Carrot are abundant in all parts of North America, including city sidewalks, parks, and vacant lots. Wild Carrot seeds are not commercially available; if you plan on using cultivated carrot seeds, be absolutely certain they haven't been treated with toxic substances.

★ **Rutin** Occurring naturally in association with vitamin C in many plant leaves, most notably Rue, buckwheat, and Elder, rutin can be used to prevent pregnancy. Take it as a tablet in doses of at least 500 mg

daily for several days preceeding and following ovulation, or take it after fertilizing intercourse and continue until the menstrual flow begins.

- **Smartweed leaves** *Polygonum hydropiper* grows as a weed all over the world and is used world-wide as a fertility regulator. It contains rutin, quercetin, and gallic acid, all of which interfere with normal pregnancy. Rutin inhibits the production of hormones which stimulate gamete production. Quercetin stimulates uterine contractions. Gallic acid is known as an anti-tumor agent; it may treat an embryo as a tumor and prevent its normal formation. Prepare an infusion of four ounces of the fresh or one ounce of the dried leaves in a quart of boiling water and drink freely until menstrual bleeding starts. Smartweed may be used to prevent implantation after intercourse during fertile days, or to bring on a missed period. It is almost certainly not safe to use unless you intend to follow up with a mechanical abortion should it not bring on the hoped-for discharge.

Menstrual Promoters

Herbs used to bring on or promote a menstrual flow are known as emmenagogues. There are at least fifty in common use throughout the world.

If your period is a day or two late, an emmenagogue may bring it on. If you suspect before your menstrual flow is due that you may be pregnant and wish not to be, begin drinking a menstrual promoter a week before your expected flow.

Some Good Emmenagogues

- **Ginger root** Cultivated *Zingiber* is one of the strongest and fastest acting of the emmenagogues. I recall a friend dashing for the bathroom after drinking a Jamaican Ginger beer, saying: "But I'm not due to bleed until tomorrow!" The simplest way to prepare Ginger is to put one teaspoon of the powdered root into a cup and pour boiling water over it. Drink when it cools somewhat. Or make an infusion of one ounce of the whole dried root or the freshly grated root in a pint of water. Take no more than four cups a day of any of these brews. If you become nauseated by drinking Ginger, you have a strong

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indication that you are pregnant. If your menstrual flow does not come within five days, discontinue use of Ginger.

• **Tansy leaves** This prolific plant should not be confused with Tansy Ragwort, a potentially poisonous plant which is a weed in the midwest. The Tansy I am speaking of is *Tanacetum vulgare*, a garden plant or a wild plant of the northeast. It is a favorite of one of my students who has used it for years as a backup to her regular birth control. When necessary, she drinks an infusion of the flowers and leaves for a week before her period is due and claims that she has never been late yet. Other women have reported that they have used Tansy infusion successfully, but were disturbed by the temporary appearance of lumps in their breasts after use. There are also reports that Tansy can cause hemorrhage among women who normally have heavy menstrual flows. One midwife reports that she uses it as a tincture, giving 10 drops in a cup of warm water every two hours until bleeding begins. She says the tincture definitely induces abortion when the period is several weeks overdue.

• **Pennyroyal leaves** The American variety of Pennyroyal, *Hedeoma pulegioides* is one of the most powerful of all emmenagogues. My first experience with using Pennyroyal as an abortifacient centered around a pregnant Great Dane. Her owner fasted her for three days, then fed her ground meat with several ounces of dried Pennyroyal mixed into it. She aborted one pup the next morning—but carried the other eight to term! They were all healthy and normal puppies. From this I have inferred that it is reasonably safe to try to abort with Pennyroyal, even if it doesn't work. But one midwife reports that in several instances women she knows have tried to abort (unsuccessfully) with Pennyroyal and their placentas have implanted dangerously low.

Pennyroyal is prepared as an infusion and taken as hot as possible; some women drink it in a hot bath. The tincture is taken in doses of 20 drops in a cup of hot water. No more than four cups of either preparation should be consumed per day and for no more than five days. This is considered sufficient to induce menstruation without taxing the woman. **CAUTION:** Half an ounce of Pennyroyal oil can cause death. **Do not use Pennyroyal oil internally.**

Also:
SQUAW HINT,
STINKING BALM,
THICKWEED,
FLEA CHASER



pennyroyal

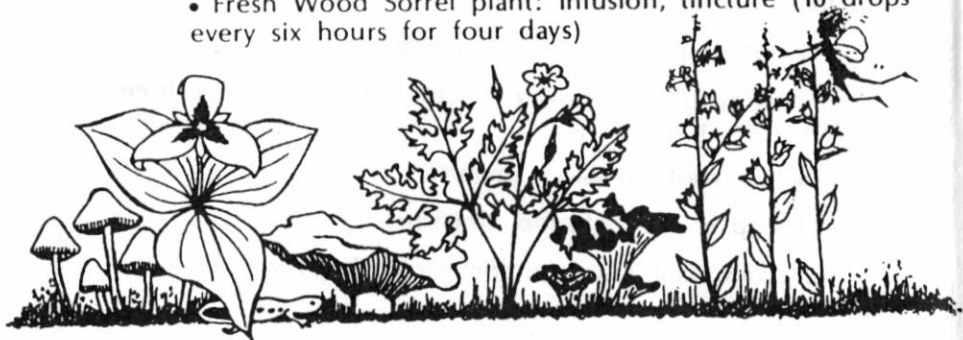
★ **Vitamin C** Ascorbic acid is the safest and reportedly most effective emmenagogue that can be used after the menstrual flow has failed to appear. Women report success even when three weeks "late." Six grams of vitamin C (6000 mg) is the daily dosage needed to abort. Take 500 mg every hour for 12 hours a day for up to six days. **CAUTION:** This dosage may produce loose stools.

A List of Emmenagogues

Don't exceed the recommended doses; many of these emmenagogues can cause strong side effects. The starred herbs (★) are oxytocic; use only with focused attention and acute sensitivity to the body's reactions. The herbs in **boldface** will bring on a late period about 60% of the time if the expected flow is no more than two weeks overdue.

- **Angelica** root: infusion, tincture (10 drops three times daily for four days)
- Fresh Lemon Balm leaves: tincture, bath
- Bethroot: infusion, tincture (a dropperful every four hours for five days)
- ★ Birthwort root or whole plant in flower: infusion
- Black Cohosh root: infusion, tincture (20 drops every six hours for four days)
- ★ Blue Cohosh root: infusion, tincture (20 drops every four hours for five days)
- ★ Cotton root bark: infusion
- European Vervain plant: tincture (15 drops every six hours for five days)
- ★ Ergot fungus: commercial extracts
- Feverfew plant in flower: tincture (40 drops every three hours for four days)
- Ginger root: infusion, tincture
- Hyssop leaves: infusion, tincture
- Liferoot plant in flower: tincture (20 drops twice daily for five days)

- Lovage root: infusion
- ★ Marijuana female flowers: infusion, tincture, smoke
- ★ Mistletoe leaves: infusion
- Motherwort plant: infusion
- Mugwort plant: decoction
- Osha root: infusion, tincture (10 drops every four hours for five days)
- **Fresh Parsley** leaves: juice, vaginal insert (several sprigs, changed twice daily for three days)
- **Pennyroyal** plant: infusion, tincture, oil (Avoid completely before and throughout pregnancy. Oil rubbed into skin may cause miscarriage.)
- ★ Peruvian bark: infusion, tincture (15 drops twice daily for four days)
- Rosemary plant in flower: infusion, tincture (20 drops twice daily for five days)
- **Rue** leaves: infusion, tincture (10 drops every six hours for four days)
- **Saffron** stigmas: one half gram daily for four days (ten grams is a fatal dose)
- Sumac berries: infusion (source of vitamin C and possibly rutin)
- Sweet Flag root: infusion, bath, tincture (10 drops every six hours for six days)
- **Tansy** plant in flower: infusion, tincture
- Fresh Wood Sorrel plant: infusion, tincture (10 drops every six hours for four days)



Uterine Contractors

Herbs which promote strong uterine contractions can cause an early miscarriage or abortion. Some uterine contractors are poisons, like Water Hemlock. Some herbs, such as certain seaweeds and pieces of Slippery Elm bark, are inserted into the os of the cervix to cause uterine contraction (and possible life threatening infection) by their irritating effect. Other herbs contain oxytocin, which encourages production of prostaglandins in the body; high levels of prostaglandins cause contraction of the uterus. A few herbs directly stimulate uterine contractions.

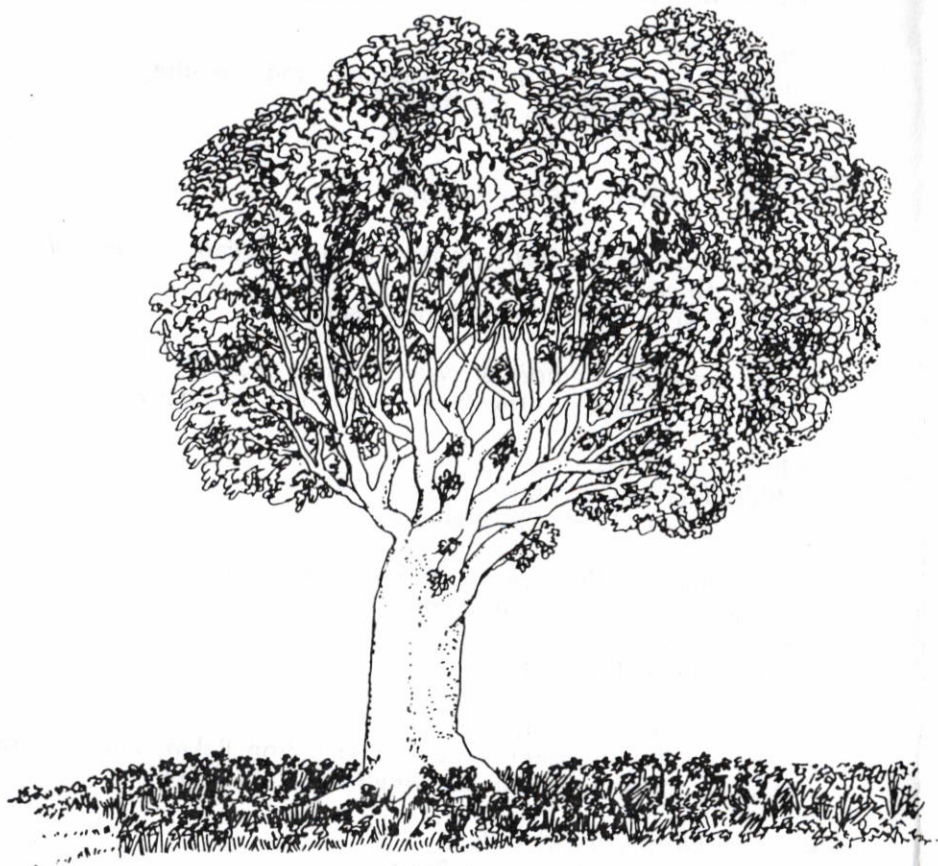
If your period is no more than two weeks late, you can probably abort by using a uterine contractor alone or in combination with a strong emmenagogue. Some women report success even when four weeks late. Abortion is a controversial subject, and herbal abortions are not an easy solution to the issues involved. Any abortion is physically, emotionally, and psychically stressful. If you decide that you are not going to nourish a life growing within, please seek a woman wise in the ways of bodies and feelings to help you.

• **Cotton root bark** *Gossypium* is reported to be the safest and most certain herbal abortifacient. I have tried to obtain some organic Cotton root bark for six years now, without success. My information on its effectiveness comes from a study done by a women's health collective in New Mexico. They used an infusion taken by sips throughout the day until the abortion was well under way. This is apparently a traditional method of birth control among Native Americans who grow cotton. Specific information on dosage and possible side effects should be available to women who live in the South and seek out a traditional healer or *curandera*.

• **Blue Cohosh root** *Caulophyllum thalictroides* is usually combined with Pennyroyal when used as an abortifacient. There are any number of ways to prepare and ingest this combination. Both Pennyroyal and Blue Cohosh are toxic in excess and can easily overtax the liver and kidneys. Headache and extreme nausea have been reported by many women using these herbs. This is a common remark: "I knew that if I could just drink one

more cup of that infusion, I would abort, but I threw up every time I tried to!" CAUTION: Do not use Blue Cohosh if you have low blood pressure.

- Emmenagogue Formulae - See Appendix II



Teratogens

Substances that cause birth defects are known as teratogens. You and the fetus are particularly sensitive to teratogens during the first five months of the childbearing year (the two months prior to conception and the first three months of pregnancy). Exposure to teratogens interferes with the rhythmic reproductive dance of your genes, chromosomes, and cells. The effects of this

disruption include infertility, miscarriage, low birth weight, and a wide range of mental and physical deformities in your baby. This list of teratogens is based on *Terata: A Mother's Prenatal Health Advisory* compiled by Jo Carrasco and Sue Keller. See References and Resources for reprint information.

Before and during pregnancy, completely avoid:

- Smoking
- Alcohol (including beer and wine)
- Raw or undercooked meat
- Radiation (x-rays, video display terminals)
- Caffeine (coffee, black tea, cola, chocolate, maté)
- DES (diethylstilbestrol)
- Aspirin
- Antihistamines, including *Ma-huang*, *Ephedra*, *Osha root*
- Most laxatives, including *Flax seed*, *Senna*, *Aloes*, *Castor Oil*, *Turkey Rhubarb*, *Buckthorn*, *Cascara Sagrada*
- Antacids
- Diuretics, including *Buchu*, *Horsetail*, *Juniper berries*
- pHisoHex (or anything else containing hexachlorophene)
- Hair dyes
- Hemorrhoid medications
- Chemical stimulants and depressants (LSD, psychotropics, phenobarbital, barbiturates, tranquilizers)
- Motion sickness or anti-nausea drugs (Bendectin)
- Epinephrine (Adrenalin) shots
- Sulfonamides (sulfa drugs) antibiotics
- Vaccines, anesthetics, mercury vapors in dentist's office
- Steroids and herbs containing steroid-like factors, including *Agave*, *Ginseng*, *Licorice*, *Hops*, *Sage* (which also decreases lactation)

- Hormones (birth control pills, most commercial meats)
- Acutane (acne medication)
- Excesses of vitamins A, C, or D (vitamins found naturally in herbs are safer than supplemental vitamin pills)
- Heavy metals: lead, nickel, cadmium, manganese
- Pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides (particularly those containing Carbaryl)
- Fumes from paints, thinners, solvents, wood preservatives, varnishes, glues, spray adhesives, benzene, dry-cleaning fluids, certain plastics, vinyl chloride, rubber tuolene
- Lithium, arsenic
- Contact with cat feces
- PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl)

And beware of the risks of:

- Incompatible Rh factors (possibly mitigated by one gram vitamin C with bioflavonoids taken daily during the last thirty weeks of pregnancy)
- Amniocentesis
- Electronic Fetal Monitoring, either indirect (ultrasound) or direct (electrode)
- Ultrasound in any form
- Prolonged exposure to extremely high temperatures
- Emmenagogues (see pages 9-10), especially during the first and last trimesters
- Common cooking herbs which may encourage miscarriage: Basil, Caraway seeds, Celery seed, Ginger, fresh Horseradish, Savory, Marjoram, Nutmeg, Rosemary, Saffron, Sage, Parsley, Tarragon, Thyme, Watercress (avoid during the first trimester; use sparingly thereafter)
- Golden Seal root (stresses liver and kidneys, raises white blood cell count, and can cause uterine contractions)

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